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SUPERVISION--EDUCATION AS A VEHICLE OF SOCIAL CHANGE.

BY- MALLAN, JOHN T. CREASON, FRANK

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THIS DOCUMENT DISCUSSES THE POTENTIALS OF EDUCATION AS A VEHICLE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE. IT SUGGESTS THAT EDUCATION IS A FORM OF MANIPULATION, SINCE IT ANTICIPATES A CHANGE IN INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOR, WITH SUCH A CHANGE NECESSARILY HAVING SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES. THE AUTHORS FURTHER STATE THAT SINCE FORMAL EDUCATION IS SUPPORTED BY PUBLIC FUNDS, IT THEREBY JUSTIFIES ITS INEVITABLE IMPACT ON SOCIETY. THE AUTHORS BELIEVE THAT FOR THESE REASONS, EDUCATION MUST MANIFEST ITS POSITION AS A SOCIAL DETERMINANT IN THE CURRICULUM. SUCH A CURRICULUM IS OUTLINED BY THE AUTHORS, WHO EMPHASIZE THE ACQUISITION OF SOCIETAL VALUES AND CONCEPTS. (JM)

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About the Authors:

Professor John T. Mallan is the director of the Cooperative Center for the Social Sciences at Ohio University.

Professor Frank Creason is associated with the Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory, Manhattan, Kansas.

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SUPERVISION: EDUCATION AS A VEHICLE OF SOCIAL CHANGE

(Change to what.....and how?)

(ends and means)

by

John T. Mallan
Frank Creason

It is said that sound education necessitates the teacher starting where his students are--and we would assume that this would be true at all levels: from kindergarten through post doctoral studies. We would also assume that such an admonition applies to the idea that we allow for individual differences: each individual is at a different starting point.

The admonition assumes, as well, something about the terms "meaning" and "explanation." Simply put, some new experience is meaningful to the extent that the old experiences somehow are bridged to the new whereby the enlarging picture makes "sense." Unless one knows what he is bridging, unless he is aware of the old (starting point) and the new (planned experience) and unless he is aware of the crucial bridge which must be made, there is no meaning and hence no explanation. In the final analysis meaning and explanation are terms covering the product of a process of relating.

Assuming all the above, we usually start a workshop or course of study by asking the people to answer (individually) the following three questions:

1. If you had only one concept to teach a youngster during his 12 or so years in the public school, what would it be?
2. If you had only one skill to teach a youngster during his 12 or so years in the public school, what would it be?
3. What do you mean when you use the term "science?"

When these are answered, we have some indication of where we are starting with individual teachers and with a group of teachers. At this point the work starts. It is only <u>after</u> we have done this that we can be assured of even coming close to a meaningful experience for those concerned.

The results of the answers to the questions are not heartening. On the contrary, we find that in general the educator (at all levels) has not given much thought to his professional effort: in most cases what he calls teaching is little more than some kind of random activity which he goes through day by day--a ritual designed to let him survive to fight another day.

But, we are not here to evaluate the starting point. As a matter of fact, time won't let us get to the starting point so we must confess that we do not know how meaningful these comments will be, but if you are willing to listen, let us begin.

The current situation in education reminds us of T. V. Smith's dog: If someone were to ask us to summarize the current situation, we would take some liberties and say:

> There was a dachshund, once so long
> He hadn't any notion
> How long it took to notify
> His tail of his emotion;
> And so it happened, while his eyes
> Were filled with woe and sadness,
> His little tail went wagging on
> Because of previous gladness.

Our emotion (the combination of relating intellect, intelligence and feeling) tells us that the role of education has changed. It used to be that formal schooling was an attempt to transmit the accumulated knowledge of the ages. The educator knew <u>what</u> to teach and his concern was with <u>how</u>.

Our emotion tells us that the role of formal schooling is now that of being an agent of social change. For example: We must integrate the public schools. Why? The larger society wants to change and wants to use the schools as an agent of this change. We must somehow teach good inter-personal relations (applied social sciences). Why? The larger society wants a change in this direction because of the need for improved civil and human rights--it wants to use the schools as an agent of social change. We must improve our teaching about international understandings (bill before Congress now). Why? The larger society wants to facilitate a stronger base in a world where domestic and foreign affairs can no longer be separated. The school again is being

asked to be an agent of social change.

The Universities face the same issues. For example, whenever a University contracts with the United States government to run a Peace Corps training program....or, more recently, a National Teacher Corps Training Program....they are in fact committing themselves to bringing about social change. The NTC's entire justification is to bring about changes which will improve the life chances of people living in the poverty areas of the country.

All attempts at education involve some concern with the process of changing and with change itself. We have answered the question posed by Harold Rugg quite a few years ago. He had asked: "Is it the role of the school to pass ON society or is the role of the school to PASS on society?" In other words, is the school only to transmit or is it to facilitate change?

In viewing the school as an agent of social change, we must recognize, if we are honest, that we assume:

1. That change is needed and is wanted.

2. That education is in and of itself "good."

Let us address ourselves to the second point first. Just last week we were privileged to hear a foreign educator and an American professor of public affairs discuss the implications of the extended view of education. The foreign educator insisted that education was in and of itself good. He said that we must

(in his country) be concerned with teaching people to read and write. The Professor kept wedging his primary point: Read and write what. When people learn these skills they are more susceptible to new forms of social control: one cannot automatically assume that because a person can read and write that he will be a democratic and open individual. Again, education for what? The application of basic skills for what end? It raised again--and this is healthy--the age old problem of ends and means.

Back to the first assumption. Education is by definition change. When we say that a person learns something we mean that we can evaluate what changes take place because he had access to certain selected experiences. We evaluate by checking his behavior to see if his experiences have modified his plans of action and indeed his action itself.

This idea of educating being change involves two encompassing steps.

Step 1: Evaluating by repeating the words involved in the learning experience. In a very real sense, this is a low level parrot type of experience and has its roots in Aristotle's belief that "to know good is to be good"----to know the words somehow assures a transfer to action. Most of our emphasis in education has been with this step. Two examples:

1.1 A candidate for a Master's Degree at a large University did a study concerned with relating final examinations in senior high school social studies with the stated objectives. Over 98% of the questions asked were NOT related to the verbalized objectives of the course. The questions assumed that some kind of miraculous transfer took place from parroting the words to the teachers' behavioral objectives.

1.2 The Journal of Applied Behavioral Sciences reported a study done in the Rochester schools. Everyone was concerned with the fact that over a million and a half Americans take up smoking every year. The health reports are obvious. What could the schools do (as agents of change...)?

A pre-test was given which found out how many students smoked. The students were also pre-tested regarding information about smoking--health ramifications, etc.

A depth unit on smoking was given to the students. All the latest information was made available: medical reports, psychological and cultural aspects, advertising, etc.

After taking the unit's work, the students did indicate having a greater amount of accurate information regarding the smoking habit. They scored higher on the post test. They had learned! BUT, CONCURRENTLY, MORE OF THE STUDENTS SMOKED AFTER THE INTENSIVE STUDY THAN BEFORE IT HAD BEEN UNDERTAKEN.

Apparently Gertrude Noar is right when she says that information is not enough.

Step 2: The second step has had, until recently, very little emphasis. The step involves asking the student to get information (step one) and then go beyond: Ask them to relate the information, plan, action, transfer,...and, in fact, change behavior.

Why has not step 2 been emphasized? It makes even "common" sense. We would guess that one of the basic reasons is that the educator (and the larger society for that matter) really has not addressed himself to the kinds of behavior which he will honor in his fellow citizens.

We gave a case study to a group of teachers in an inservice program. It was a behavioral case study. We simply told what a man did and asked if the teachers would want him as a citizen and a neighbor. The subject being written about was a nice guy who helped his neighbors. He was good to his wife and kids...and to

other youngsters on the block. He attended Board of Education meetings. He wrote letters to the paper, was involved in politics, etc. He was honest, quiet, paid his bills, etc. But: he was different: he read magazines which his neighbors did not read. He had guests to his house from all walks of life. He did not go to church...

The group split on whether or not this type of human being was desired. He was different to be sure--BUT WHAT ABOUT HIS ACTUAL BEHAVIOR?

We had a furious battle over this: This is what we are driving at. What kind of human being do we want in our society? When this is answered, our problem becomes one of selecting experiences which will lead to this kind of behavior.

It was rewarding to see Franklin Patterson of the Lincoln Filene Center at Tufts address himself to similar concerns (TC RECORD, January, 1966). He posed his list of educational concerns in the form of propositions and questions. In general, he maintained:

1. The concepts which people hold about themselves serve as directives to their behavior. Anthropology, Sociology, and Social Psychology seem to have data which pushes this point. "Know Thyself" said Socrates... we have learned that man is a social being and that to know himself is to know his relationship with other

human beings. To know this relationship makes him "freer" in the sense that he is no longer captive to areas unknown. If people know how they form the self-concept: the influences, pressures, actions, reactions, influence of tradition and language, etc., how many more alternatives open up for human action?

2. Social groups are significant in that they act as referents to individual behavior. This obviously is tied in with the first concern. It also draws heavily from the social and behavioral sciences.
3. Perception: How does one learn that this culture cues, his language, his preconceptions, his stereotypes, may restrict behavior and be dysfunctional. Patterson asks how education can help one in becoming aware of his perceptions as they relate to his conceptions and these, in turn, to his "swiftly changing environmental reality."
4. Communication--the process of communicating--is the basic social cohesiveness in any society. How much time do we spend on "words" and messages and means of assuring meaning? What role does this play in conflict? Do we ever even suggest that our world view is rooted in the type of sentence we use: the subject and the predicate--separating the doer from the doing?

Patterson raised two more issues of concern to the educator and to the larger society. The problem of problem solving and

and the issue of behavior being goal oriented. It is interesting to note that both in the area of problems and the area of goal oriented behavior, the key issue is one of values. Chief Justice Brennan reminded us of this when he spoke before the National Council of Social Studies in Philadelphia. He said that in every case coming before the Supreme Court, the basic issue involved is one of values. This would be true, we would argue, of economic, political and social problems--(if we still have to divide human behavior into these categories in order to prosletyze separate disciplines).

If you have been following us to this point, it becomes obvious that certain "set" ends of behavior have not been addressed. Rather, the means as a form of behavior have received emphasis: diverse behavior is to be the rule and not the exception. This is not to say that there is chaos. By no means: the rules assure the things we talk about: free inquiry, free speech, free pursuit of intellectual doubt, all people (regardless of race, creed, color, education) having access to the processes of human interaction. I think this is what the Bill of Rights concerns itself with: the democratic human being is one who knows the processes of changing, uses them, and allows others to use them. The processes are the means. Democracy is a noun which is a static term describing a form of activity which relates ends and means.

Over a century ago John Ruskin wrote that "Education does not mean teaching people what they do not know. It means teaching them to behave as they do not behave."

More recently the philosopher the American's wooed from the British, Alfred North Whitehead, said that "There is only one subject matter for education, and that is life in all its manifestations."

What we are suggesting is that all education is a form of manipulation. Before, this emotionally packed word blocks us, let us explain:

1. We assume that the reason for formal schooling is that some change will take place. If not, why have it at public expense?
2. We assume that certain experiences: readings, activities, grade levels, units, curricula, lesson plans, etc., will lead to these changes.
3. We <u>select</u> certain experiences over others because it is absurd to think that we can give <u>all</u> experiences.
4. We assume that what we select best accomplishes the types of changes we desire. Otherwise, we are charlatans of the call girl variety.
5. Selecting experiences is a form of manipulating the environment.

6. Therefore, when all is said and done, you and I are manipulators everytime we act in the role of teacher (supervisor).

Another important point: The formal school is paid for by society and thus the justification for such an arrangement is that education (the selected experiences) will have social consequences. Thus, what we do is not an individual act when we teach, but rather, a social act having social consequences. We select for other people! THIS IS THE MORAL INGREDIENT.

If you and I really believed what we know about human behavior and our behavior changed...

If you and I really saw what we do in education as a moral choice and the responsibility which goes with that choice...

If you and I could somehow wipe away the choking debris from the past and bring the sparks and not the ashes from the past communion fires...

If you and I could somehow believe that what we do <u>does</u> make a difference in the lives of our fellow beings and hence in our own lives...

WHAT KIND OF A FRAMEWORK MIGHT WE STAND UP AND DEMAND? Hopefully yours will be somewhat different than ours but we think we would ask for the following:

Primary Grades: A Focus on Thinking. Viewing thinking as a tool. How a person learns: the sources of learning-tradition, language, groups, perception, conception, etc. The difference (continuum) between mankind and the other kinds of animals. How we study ourselves.

Intermediate Grades: Communication as a process: types of language-verbal, non-verbal, mathematics, symbols, signs. Meaning and the messages. Perceptions, stereotypes, language and culture. Words as man made and as a crucial tool in social cooperation.

Junior High School: Interdisciplinary and Multi-disciplinary approach using the persistent problems of mankind as the focus areas: Problems (and countless sub-problems) concerned with such things as:

1. Conflict
2. Human Organization (Political, Economic, Social).
3. Automation and Technological Change.
4. Population
5. International Cooperation.

These truly cut across disciplines: your

art, literature, social sciences, mathematics; all are concerned.

Senior High School: Again, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary:

1. Development of Intellectual Thought: Relating the World and U.S.--literature, art, history, mathematics, social sciences, philosophy.
2. Problem seminars in all areas.
3. Problem laboratory.

You are probably saying "you are a dreamer!" You are probably saying that your task is to "cover" so much ground in a particular discrete discipline. We would then ask you that perhaps your real task is to "uncover" ground! Perhaps we would even push you a bit on the discrete and private territory which we all so vehemently protect.

You are probably saying that it is easy for us to dream this way. Not really: this is exactly what several school systems around the country are concerned with doing: implementing a program which has intellectual and moral integrity. To be sure, it is not an easy task. Living is not an easy task. To "uncover" ourselves means some kind of sharing of experiences, of attempts, of people, of ideas, of workshops, of failures as well as successes. The Cooperative Center for Social Science Education is involved in just such activity. Provincial lines between school systems,

personnel, Universities and public schools, are being torn away.

We think that the one assumption we work on is that teachers do have a vision of what can be done in a classroom. The vision of visions are hopefully NOT all the same. As the schools work together, change takes place:

As Ferdinant LaSalle wrote:

> Show us not the aim without the way.
> For ends and means on earth are so entangled
> that changing one, you change the other for;
> Each different path brings other ends in view.

On our desk at the office is a picture of a clown. It is a sad clown but it means a lot to us. Inscribed under the picture is a quote which says in effect that life to the wise man is a comedy...to those of lesser wisdom, a tragedy. To most of us, a little of both. A tear and a smile.

Either way we know that living and teaching is to expose a raw nerve of failure...this can be painful.

But, there is hope in this, too. The behavioral scientists tell us that a good deal of even physical pain is culturally related. Once we know that which we perceive and the conditioning which has gone into it, we can scoff at some of the pain... knowing that failure is non-existent unless something was tried.

This is the difference between vegetating and being human.

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12 or so years in the public school, what would it be?

If you had only one skill to teach a youngster during his 12 or so years in the public school, what would it be?